

STATE OF OHIO                     )  
  )  
CUYAHOGA COUNTY)       SS:

AFFIDAVIT OF AARON PETITT

I, Aaron Petitt, first having been duly sworn, do freely depose and say:

- 1) I am a resident of Fairview Park, Ohio.
- 2) I am a junior at Fairview High School and am 16 years old.
- 3) On September 12, 2001, I attended an assembly convened by Fairview High School administrators regarding the tragic events of September 11, 2001.
- 4) During the September 12, 2001 assembly, Mr. Willgren and Mr. Haughtaling did not announce that Fairview High School's long-standing tradition of posting signs on lockers had been banned or changed.
- 5) On September 13, 2001, I hung a number of signs on the outside of my school locker including an American flag, an eagle with a tear drop and the twin towers burning in the background, and a picture of several American Airline planes dropping bombs.
- 6) On September 13, 2001, I had hung three copies of the picture of several American Airline planes on my locker. Two of the copies had written statements underneath. One read "Flight 93 never to be forgotten" and the other "Good Morning Afgan". The last copy did not have a written statement. A copy of the signs is attached hereto under Tab A.
- 7) At least one employee of Fairview High School made positive comments about the American Airline plane picture between September 13, 2001 and October 4, 2001.
- 8) Several students requested me to make them a copy of the American Airline plane picture.



- 9) At all relevant times, I displayed on the outside of my locker the only copies of the American Airline plane pictures that I had hung on school premises.
- 10) A person(s), whose identity is unknown to me, displayed copies of the American Airline plane pictures I had created on the outside of some student lockers and in school hallways. A copy of the signs is attached hereto under Tab B.
- 11) On or about October 3, 2001, I returned to my locker and found my American Airline plane pictures had been removed. Upon information and belief, Mr. Haughtaling, the assistant principal of Fairview High School, had removed the three patriotic postings from my locker that had hung continuously since at least September 13, 2001.
- 12) On October 4, 2001 Mr. Willgren met with me and threatened that I would be escorted from the school premises immediately and receive a harsher penalty if I "made a big deal" out of the administration's decision to discipline me or if I discussed my views or opinions on the matter with students or teachers.
- 13) On October 4, 2001 Mr. Willgren also questioned me continuously about whether I had remorse for posting the signs and told me "how would you like it if I dropped you off at East 92<sup>nd</sup> and see if you got out alive?"
- 14) Mr. Willgren repeatedly stated to me that I should have remorse as the signs "pointed fingers at middle eastern kids."
- 15) On October 8, 2001, I attended a hearing presided over by Nylajeane R. McDaniel, superintendent for the Fairview Park City School District.
- 16) At the October 8, 2001 hearing, which was tape-recorded, Ms. McDaniel indicated that I had been suspended for posting and distributing inappropriate signs.
- 17) Ms. McDaniel had been informed at the October 8, 2001 hearing regarding the statement by Mr. Willgren described in Paragraph 13 herein.

- 18) Ms. McDaniel, Mr. Willgren, and Mr. Haughtaling never claimed that the signs resulted in a disruption to the school functioning or an actual injury to any Arab Americans attending Fairview High School.
- 19) From September 13, 2001 to October 4, 2001, Fairview High School administrators took no action to inform me that the signs on my locker either violated school policy or constituted inappropriate material.
- 20) From at least September 16, 2001 to October 4, 2001, other Fairview High School students displayed copies of the American Airline plane signs without disciplinary action.
- 21) Mr. Willgren threatened that I would receive a higher level of discipline if I discussed my views or opinions with Fairview High School students or teachers.
- 22) At least seventy-five (75) students signed a petition in support of my signs since October 4, 2001.
- 23) I never intended for the posters at issue to threaten any student or employee at Fairview High School nor any other specific individual or national origin or religion.
- 24) I intended the posters at issue to be an artistic expression of my feelings about the events of September 11, 2001.

FURTHER SAYETH NAUGHT

  
AARON PETTITT

Sworn to and subscribed in my presence this 24 day of October, 2001.

  
NOTARY PUBLIC

WERY S. FINE  
Notary Public - State of Ohio  
My commission has no expiration date  
Section 147.03 R. C.